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Natasza STYCZYŃSKA

Uniwersytet Jagielloński
ORCID: 0000-0001-5056-8241

Serbia and the European Union: A Decade of Negotiating Challenges (2014–2024)

Abstract: The article analyses Serbia's EU accession negotiations (2014–2024), focusing on the interplay between domestic politics and foreign policy objectives. Serbia's pragmatic foreign policy balances EU aspirations with strategic partnerships (Russia, China, US), reflecting its historical context (Non-Aligned Movement) and the Kosovo issue. Employing a qualitative methodology, including a literature review and 2024 interviews with Serbian political actors (politicians, experts, and public servants) this article discusses challenges in the EU negotiations and the insignificant progress, pointing out the unresolved Kosovo issue as one of the major political obstacles. Despite the Serbian government's stated priorities, the analysis suggests a disconnect between the rhetoric and actions of both the EU and Serbian political elite. The EU's commitment to the region is evident (e.g., Western Balkans Growth Plan), but Serbia's internal challenges and ambivalent stance significantly diminish the likelihood of swift EU accession. This article offers insights into the complexities of Serbia's EU integration seen from the perspective of domestic political actors.

Key words: Serbia, European Union, EU Enlargement, Western Balkans, Foreign Policy

Introduction

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia, which concluded with the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995, the former countries of the Socialist Federal Republic oriented their foreign policies towards the West. European integration was prioritised due to its stabilising influence, with membership perceived as a pathway to economic prosperity. Serbia, like other post-Yugoslav states, was expected to progress rapidly towards democracy and EU integration. However, it instead fostered new forms of authoritarianism and conflict (Vladisavljević, 2022). After the fall of Milošević, Serbia experienced a brief period of pro-democratic reform, primarily under the premiership of Zoran Đinđić, who was assassinated in 2003. Although there was a rhetorical commitment to integration with the EU, the process from the outset was slow and heavily influenced by domestic political dynamics and regional relations.

Serbia began accession negotiations with the European Union on 21 January 2014, having formally applied in 2009 and achieved candidate status in 2012 (European Commission, 2024). Serbia's path to the opening of negotiations was fraught with difficulties, and discussions regarding the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) were temporarily suspended in 2006 due to insufficient cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. As of today, 22 out of 35 chapters have been opened, but there has been virtually no progress in negoti-

ations regarding individual chapters over the past two years. The lack of cooperation between Serbia and EU institutions following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine has meant that, despite the Commission adopting a new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans in November 2023, little has changed in terms of Serbia’s accession negotiations. Since February 2022, the government in Belgrade has revitalised the concept of basing its foreign policy on four pillars, a notion previously promoted by President Boris Tadić, which proposed the development of an equal partnership with the EU, Russia, the U.S., and China. This attempt to balance relations between major powers, coupled with a deeply rooted Euroscepticism, has branded Serbia one of the most critical countries towards the EU in Europe, with most relevant political parties holding some degree of Eurosceptic stance (Styczyńska, Dajc, 2022). Furthermore, analyses of reports from international organisations monitoring the state of democracy, free media, and political system transformations reveal a predominantly negative evaluation of the condition of democracy in Serbia. The V-Dem Institute’s report emphasises that the quality of democracy in Serbia has declined and classified it as an “electoral autocracy” since 2022 (V-Dem Institute, 2022). The general pattern of democracy scores over the last decade indicates that, despite obtaining candidate status and financial support from the EU, there has been little to no significant progress in Serbia’s democratic standards. Freedom House also categorises Serbia as not fully democratic, describing it as a “partially free regime” and noting that “the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) has steadily eroded political rights and civil liberties, putting pressure on independent media, the political opposition, and civil society organisations” (Freedom House, 2024a). The issues surrounding the quality of democracy, the dominant position of a single political party, and the autocratic tendencies of the ruling elite directly influence how EU integration is framed, discussed, and utilised by the political elite in Serbia. Moreover, as observed by Stojić (2022), minimal EU involvement contributes to the strengthening of Eurosceptic and anti-democratic trends in the country. Simultaneously, the level of trust in democratic institutions and Western organisations remains relatively low. This situation is linked to internal circumstances and is a consequence of the recent war in Kosovo, during which Serbia was bombed by NATO forces in 1999. Additionally, the unresolved issue of Kosovo, a Serbian province that declared independence in 2008, which has never been recognised by the government in Belgrade, remains significant. The EU’s insistence on normalising relations between Serbia and Kosovo also faces criticism from segments of the political elite and the public. It thus appears that perceptions of the EU and the level of support for it are largely determined by internal issues and a historical feeling of injustice and victimisation (Subotić, 2010, p. 320).

The article is divided into four sections to shed light on the decade of EU-Serbia accession negotiations. The first section presents the EU integration of Serbia as a field of study and explains the database utilised in the article. The second section is dedicated to Serbia’s foreign policy, emphasising the EU enlargement process, the obstacles and challenges faced, and a recent assessment of the negotiations. The following section examines the perceptions of the EU among Serbian political actors and incorporates insights from the pilot study of qualitative interviews. The article concludes with final remarks and conclusions.

Serbia’s EU integration as a subject of study

Already in 2003, during the Thessaloniki Summit, EU officials signed a declaration that expressed “unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries” and emphasised that “the future of the Balkans is within the European Union” (European Commission, 2003). Since then, most countries in the Balkan region have achieved EU candidate status, including Serbia in 2012. However, over the past decade, the countries of the region have encountered numerous external and internal obstacles on their path to EU accession, which have slowed down the negotiations. One consequence of the challenges faced by Serbia is the development of “pre-enlargement fatigue,” characterised by diminishing public support related to uncertainty regarding the accession process (Bazić, 2019; Styczyńska, 2023).

Since the beginning of the accession process, researchers and analysts have mapped and evaluated both progress and problematic areas. Due to the prolonged nature of this process, there is a growing body of literature covering Serbia’s EU accession negotiations. Many books and articles adopt a comparative approach, situating Serbia’s case within the broader context of the Western Balkan countries (e.g. Jović, 2018; Sekulić, 2020; Uvalić, 2023). In the regional context, the literature focuses on the economic implications of accession (e.g. Bartlett, Uvalić, 2022), EU conditionality (e.g. Bieber, 2013; Džankić et al., 2019), and security issues (Džuverović, Stojarová, 2023).

I have adopted a case study approach to fully capture the complexity of Serbia’s integration into the EU, particularly from an internal perspective. Generally, case studies offer greater detail, richness, completeness, and depth for a research unit compared to cross-unit analyses (Denzin, Lincoln, 2005). Despite being sometimes downplayed or overlooked, a significant portion of our empirical knowledge is derived from case studies, which continue to represent a considerable share of the output in the field of political science (Gerring, 2004).

Due to its historical legacy and contemporary developments, Serbia serves as a unique example of a not-very-enthusiastic EU candidate state attempting to navigate a foreign policy that balances EU integration with relationships with other global players, per the ‘four pillars’ concept. In this context, focusing on Serbia as a single case study is particularly compelling. Thus, the main aim of this article is to analyse and explain the last decade of Serbia’s accession struggles and to identify the primary challenges encountered in this process. The guiding research question is: How is European integration presented in the context of other foreign policy goals, and what implications does this have for the future of Serbia’s accession?

An attempt was made to address these questions using a qualitative methodology, drawing on existing literature as well as a pilot study comprising qualitative semi-structured interviews with experts, public servants, and politicians conducted in 2024. Although limited in scope, the interviews illustrate the perceptions of the European Union and European integration within the context of Serbian foreign policy objectives, as viewed by elected politicians (members of parliament), foreign policy experts, and public servants (working for regional government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of European Integration). The criteria applied for selecting respondents included actor type, gender, age, and level of expertise. Interviews were transcribed and

analysed using MAXQDA software. The added value of this article lies in its attempt to examine Serbia’s EU integration from a domestic perspective, focusing on the narratives of significant political actors and their perceptions of the process to date.

European Integration and Serbia’s Foreign Policy Post-2014 in the Context of Internal Transformations

After the EU accession talks were officially opened in January 2014, Serbia adopted a pragmatic approach to foreign relations, aiming to balance its aspirations for EU membership with strategic partnerships with non-European actors and regional dynamics. While Serbia possesses the administrative capacity to join the EU, it is affected by internal political dynamics and a foreign policy that does not necessarily prioritise EU integration. The attempt to balance relationships between different global players is a characteristic feature of Serbian foreign policy and is not a new phenomenon. Invoking the traditions of Yugoslavia, which was a member of the Non-Aligned Movement during the bipolar division of the world, Serbia’s political elite endeavours to pursue a multipolar policy today as well. The concept known as the Four Pillars of Foreign Policy, initiated by Serbian President Boris Tadić in 2009, strategically aligns Serbia with four key global players: the European Union, the United States, China, and Russia. This policy was a direct response to Kosovo’s secession and the EU and US support for it, positioning China and Russia as essential alternatives should EU and US support wane (Beckmann-Dierkes, Rankić, 2022).

After Aleksandar Vučić came to power in 2012, the “both East and West” foreign policy was further developed. Since then, Serbia has signed strategic partnerships with non-Western countries, including the United Arab Emirates and Azerbaijan (Vučković, 2023). The Four Pillars policy gained significant attention after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The EU remains Serbia’s most influential partner in terms of trade and investment, as well as in political terms, due to the ongoing EU accession talks. Russia serves as the main source of gas and, more importantly, as a key ally for Serbia in the UN Security Council, supporting Serbia’s interests in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. China plays an important role through strategic investments in several companies and crucial infrastructure projects, such as the Belgrade-Budapest railway, which is part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative, as well as the Bor copper mining complex (Vladisavljev, 2022).

Although the United States has the lowest trade exchange with Serbia compared to the other three partners, it remains a significant investor. However, public perception of the US is rather negative due to the 1999 NATO bombings of Yugoslavia. The war in Ukraine and the increasing tensions between the EU and the US on one side and Russia on the other have compelled Serbia to reassess its foreign policy strategy, especially since, like all Western Balkan EU candidate states, Serbia is expected to align its foreign policy with that of the EU. This situation has resulted in a paradoxical scenario where Serbia condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine alongside the EU and NATO, yet has not imposed sanctions on Russia. The ruling parties oppose sanctions against Russia, reflecting the sentiment that over 80% of the population does not support them.

EU-Serbia accession negotiations have evolved significantly over the years. As with other countries in the region, the process started with the Thessaloniki Summit in June 2003, where the EU reaffirmed its commitment to the European perspective of the Western Balkans. A decisive step towards deeper integration was taken in April 2008, when Serbia signed and provisionally implemented the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). In the same year, Kosovo proclaimed its independence, a declaration that was not recognised by Belgrade and which provoked mixed reactions from EU member states (currently, 5 out of 27 EU members still do not recognise Kosovo).

Since the 2008 Kosovo declaration of independence, the EU has assumed a mediating role in the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, encouraging both parties to engage in constructive discussions. The Brussels Agreement of 2013, facilitated by the EU, represented a significant step aiming to address some of the key issues between the two entities. In December 2009, Serbia achieved visa-free travel for its citizens to the Schengen area and submitted its application for EU membership, underscoring its commitment to EU integration. As a result of the EU’s engagement, dialogue on the normalisation of relations with Kosovo commenced in March 2011, culminating in the signing of the Brussels Agreement in 2013. The European Council granted Serbia candidate status for EU membership in March 2012, further consolidating its aspirations.

The formal opening of accession negotiations took place on 21 January 2014, during the first intergovernmental conference (European Commission, 2024). In December 2015, Serbia opened Chapter 35, focusing on the normalisation of relations with Kosovo, and in July 2016, the chapters addressing the rule of law – Chapters 23 and 24 – were opened. A revision of the enlargement methodology was presented by the European Commission in February 2020, aimed at enhancing the credibility and dynamism of the process. This was followed by the adoption of an Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans in October 2020, designed to support the region’s approximation to the EU (ibid.). To date, Serbia has opened 22 out of 35 chapters. Most recently, the European Commission adopted a new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans in November 2023, further emphasising the EU’s commitment to the region’s integration (ibid.). However, the accession talks have not progressed since the beginning of 2022.

Relations between Serbia and the EU institutions and member states are increasingly characterised by the phenomenon of “stabilitocracy.” The term “stabilitocracy” was first employed in relation to the Montenegrin regime in 2016, suggesting that the West was overlooking widespread undemocratic practices in order to maintain political stability (Bieber, 2018). Today, Serbia appears to be the most prominent example of stabilitocracy in the Western Balkans, claiming to provide stability while simultaneously expressing its desire to integrate with the EU. This is achieved through reliance on informal, clientelistic structures, media control, and the regular production of crises to undermine democracy and the rule of law (Bieber, 2018). The concept of “stabilitocracy” enables the West to persist in its rhetoric of promoting democracy and human rights, alongside an independent judiciary and free, transparent elections (Pavlović, 2017).

As with any other candidate state, the European Commission issues an annual report regarding the achievements and obstacles in the accession negotiations. Examining this report is essential for fully understanding the challenges and problematic areas that Serbia is grappling with. The 2022 report from the European Commission (European

Commission, 2022) noted that the Serbian government continues to declare EU accession as a top priority; however, more action needs to be taken. While Serbia has aligned with the EU and most of the international community in two United Nations resolutions condemning Russian aggression in Ukraine, strong relations between Serbia and Russia persist. Like other candidate states, Serbia is expected to align its policies with the EU regarding restrictive measures and sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation. Based on the European Commission’s 2023 report on Serbia, the main challenges and problematic areas hindering Serbia’s EU accession negotiations can be categorised into five areas, which I will discuss in the following paragraphs.

The first challenge relates to political criteria and highlights deep political polarisation, which has been particularly exacerbated by the mass shootings in May 2023. There are also unaddressed, long-standing recommendations to improve the electoral framework, as well as tensions between the ruling majority and the opposition in parliament, including issues related to parliamentary procedure and the code of conduct, alongside insufficient cooperation between the government and civil society (European Commission, 2023).

The second major challenge remains the rule of law. As noted in previous reports, the current report indicates limited progress in public administration reform, particularly in human resource management and policy coordination; shortcomings in the judicial system, despite advancements in implementing legislation; and limited progress in the fight against corruption, particularly the absence of a national anti-corruption strategy and weak implementation of GRECO recommendations.

The third area concerns fundamental rights. Issues raised include delays in recruiting staff for key institutions such as the Ombudsman’s Office and the Commissioner for Public Information and Personal Data Protection, as well as slow implementation of strategies and action plans related to gender equality, anti-discrimination, and Roma inclusion. Concerns persist regarding freedom of expression, including attacks and threats against journalists, as well as indirect government influence on the media.

Good neighbourly relations are consequently a vital issue highlighted in the EU reports. The European Commission advises that Serbia demonstrate a more serious commitment to normalising relations with Kosovo by fully implementing past agreements and engaging more constructively in negotiations. The tense situation in Kosovo, particularly the violence in September 2023, presents a major obstacle. The question of the disputed territory of Kosovo and its impact on Serbia’s integration progress is a crucial issue that has attracted considerable attention from numerous scholars. This issue represents one of the most challenging political dilemmas, typically linked directly to the country’s progress in the integration process. Most researchers agree that the “Kosovo question” is the most sensitive topic and is also highly politicised (Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska, 2019; Lubik-Reczek, 2016; Ejdus, 2020). However, the EU views the normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo as a fundamental requirement for Serbia’s accession.

The fifth area mentioned in the European Commission’s report concerns economic criteria. While Serbia has made progress in developing a market economy, it faces several challenges, including high inflation, a strong state footprint in the economy, an underdeveloped private sector, and weaknesses in the rule of law. Additionally, there are concerns about the quality and relevance of education and training concerning labour market needs. Last but not least, the question of alignment with EU policies is addressed.

Like other EU candidates, Serbia needs to improve its alignment with the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy, particularly regarding restrictive measures against Russia.

Perception of Serbian Political Actors on the EU and European Integration

The Serbian political landscape is fragmented but predominantly dominated by a single political actor: the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), which has been in power since 2012. The emblematic leader of the SNS is the current President Aleksandar Vučić, who also served as Prime Minister from 2014 to 2017. The most recent, 2024, parliamentary elections were early elections, called as a result of instability caused by mass protests following shootings in Belgrade and Mladenovac (Freedom House, 2024b). As a result, a government was formed and is led by Vučić’s SNS in cooperation with the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), the Party of United Pensioners, Farmers, and Proletarians of Serbia (PUPS), and the Social Democratic Party of Serbia (SDPS). The parties that provide confidence and supply include the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, United Serbia (JS), and six Members of Parliament (MPs) from smaller parties (the Russian Party, Healthy Serbia, the Peasant Party, and the People’s Party). The opposition is represented by the Party of Freedom and Justice (SSP), the People’s Movement of Serbia & the New Face of Serbia (NPS–NLS), the National Democratic Alternative (NADA), the Green–Left Front (ZLF), Serbia Centre (SRCE), the Democratic Party (DS), We – Voice from the People (MI–GIN), We – Power of the People (MI–SN), Ecological Uprising (EU), and MPs representing the Albanian and Bosniak minorities (National Assembly, 2024).

Canveren and Aknur (2020) argue that “identity politics” determines party positions and political orientations towards the EU agenda in Serbian party politics. In their analysis of the underlying reasons and legitimation strategies of Serbian parties regarding the EU, they claim that hard Eurosceptic parties frame the EU as the “other” and/or an enemy, due to the 1999 NATO bombardment and the recognition of Kosovo’s independence by EU member states. In a similar vein, Sojic (2022, p. 375) notes that the position on European integration is related to the assessment of the EU’s stance on Kosovo and the party’s ideological orientation, with more conservative and nativist parties employing increasingly anti-European arguments.

The empirical research conducted in 2024 confirms the strong influence of domestic politics on the perception of foreign policy and, consequently, European integration. Experts emphasise that the concept of the Four Pillars in foreign policy is presented by the ruling government as the only option that will ensure Serbia’s security and respect for its interests on the international stage. Respondents acknowledge that the attempt to balance between Western and non-Western actors is characteristic of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) policy; however, this approach is viewed positively by the ruling party or the government supporting parties but is considered unfavourable by respondents representing opposition parties (PPI 7, PPI 3, PPI 4), who argue that “values, rather than states, should be the pillars of foreign policy” (PPI 5). One respondent highlighted that the Four Pillars policy is the only viable option, asserting that “it is not in Serbia’s interest to align with any organisation, as it is capable of negotiating better terms as an independently negotiating state” (PPI 2).

Some respondents affiliated with the ruling party or parties supporting the governing coalition (so-called confidence and supply parties) emphasise that the European Union’s policy towards Serbia is inconsistent, sometimes giving the impression that “Serbia pretends to reform while the EU pretends to be interested in accepting Serbia” (PPI 6). This resembles a kind of “hot/cold” game, or a “game of appearances” (PPI 2). The protracted accession process and the lack of progress in negotiating individual chapters contribute to an intensification of the feeling of pre-enlargement fatigue. The government is not interested in conducting a pro-EU campaign, nor is there any indication that the EU is investing in informational or educational campaigns in Serbia (PPI 5). The growing Euroscepticism is a shared responsibility of both the government and the EU; Serbian media, largely financially dependent on the ruling SNS, do not report on the positives of EU membership. Furthermore, the EU does not invest in independent media or other channels to reach society or non-governmental organisations – “there are no carrots anymore, we see no pull, so there is no push” (EXI 1).

These reflections align with the results of recent surveys; according to the 2023 Eurobarometer, only 32% of Serbs tend to trust the EU, and a similar number (31%) believe that EU membership would be beneficial for Serbia (EWB, 2023).

Experts underline that the “EU is losing credibility” in Serbia, particularly due to the application of stabilitocracy and the lack of clarity regarding whether there is a “will to expand” within the EU (EXI 1). Representative of the state agency noted that “the messages coming from the EU are warm, cold, ice cold… never hot” (PAI 3), which contributes to pre-enlargement fatigue and a lack of motivation to pursue membership.

When respondents were asked about the most problematic areas and those that remain the greatest challenges for negotiations, they highlighted the same issues referenced in the European Commission’s annual reports. One of these issues is the reform of the legal system and the assurance of the rule of law. Many judicial reforms are still awaiting full implementation, but respondents point out problems in this area that also exist within the EU. For some ruling parties, the European Union is perceived as attempting to interfere too deeply in the internal political affairs of candidate countries. Politicians from the ruling party highlight the “hypocrisy of the European Union,” which “does not hold itself and its members to the same standards it demands of candidate countries” (PPI 2). In a similar vein, public servants involved in the membership negotiations observe that “EU messages are contradictory” (PAI 1) and that “double standards are applied” (PAI 2).

Political programmes, particularly those of parties opposed to European integration, also highlight the issues of asymmetry in the accession negotiations and the EU’s tendency to impose its solutions on member states (Styczyńska, Dajc, 2022). It is important to emphasise that, as I experienced in my earlier research, access to and the timeliness of party manifestos from Serbian political parties pose a challenge. Not all parties issue new manifestos before elections; some only provide a brief list of goals published on leaflets and social media.[1] The European Union is not discussed in a broader context, but rather in terms of its significance for the internal situation in Serbia. The ruling coalition,

[1] Even ruling SNS seems not to have a full programmatic manifesto but only a set of bullet points prepared for the 2023 elections. As for 2024, on the official webpage, there is only a short “Economic Program of Serbian Progressive Party” presented. Obtaining a hard copy of the programme from the SNS office was impossible as well.

although declaring EU membership as a priority, does not appear to be interested in achieving the goal of enlargement. On the other hand, Vučić, during more than a decade of his rule, has proven to be a useful partner for EU institutions and member states. As observed by Bieber, stabilitocracy can be observed in the regimes that “are known to claim they are securing stability while they pretend to espouse EU integration and rely on informal, clientelist structures, control of the media, and the regular production of crises to undermine democracy and the rule of law” (Bieber, 2018, p. 7). Focusing on Serbia, the logic and effectiveness of EU conditionality are increasingly questioned in light of Serbia’s gradual decline in positive democratic indicators.

Conclusions

Serbia’s foreign policy in the last decade has been characterized by pragmatism, balancing EU integration aspirations with strategic partnerships with non-European actors (Russia, China, and the US). This multipolar approach reflects the historical context of Yugoslavia’s Non-Aligned Movement legacy, anti-Western sentiment stemming from the 1999 NATO intervention, and a response to the Kosovo issue, providing alternative sources of international support. Within this context, European integration is presented by the ruling parties as one component of a broader multipolar foreign policy strategy (“the Four Pillars”).

While the ruling SNS government publicly prioritizes EU accession, internal political realities, including authoritarian tendencies and the adoption of a “stabilitocracy” model, suggest a lack of genuine commitment from the Serbian elite to the reforms necessary for EU membership. However, interview data also reveal inconsistent EU messaging and a decline in EU credibility in Serbia. This inconsistent messaging, coupled with a perceived lack of seriousness about expansion among many Serbian political actors, has fueled Euroscepticism and an ambivalent stance towards EU integration.

A major symbolic obstacle remains the status of Kosovo. While the EU emphasizes the normalization of relations as a key requirement for accession, some Serbian political actors view this as a precursor to recognizing Kosovar independence. Furthermore, the rule of law and democratic backsliding represent significant challenges to Serbia’s EU enlargement prospects. Ongoing challenges concerning the rule of law – including judicial reform, corruption, and restrictions on freedom of expression – hinder Serbia’s progress toward EU membership standards. The 2023 European Commission enlargement report for Serbia highlights progress in implementing reforms but underscores the need for further action in the areas of rule of law, judicial independence, and alignment with the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy, particularly concerning Russia’s war in Ukraine and imposing sanctions.

The EU employs a combination of incentives and conditions (the “carrot-and-stick” approach) to encourage progress in negotiations. While financial aid, technical assistance, and the promise of EU membership are intended as incentives, in Serbia’s case, these “carrots” appear insufficient, compounded by the ambivalence of the political discourse surrounding EU accession.

Despite President von der Leyen’s declaration at the October 2024 Berlin Process Summit that “enlargement is very much at the top of our agenda” and a vision of Western

Balkan partners joining the EU, Serbia’s current foreign policy approach, coupled with its domestic political dynamics and growing Euroscepticism, significantly reduces the likelihood of rapid EU accession. The lack of genuine commitment to reforms, inconsistent EU messaging, and the unresolved Kosovo issue create considerable uncertainty regarding the future of Serbia’s EU path.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization (Konceptualizacja): Natasza Styczyńska

Data curation (Zestawienie danych): Natasza Styczyńska

Formal analysis (Analiza formalna): Natasza Styczyńska

Writing – original draft (Piśmiennictwo – oryginalny projekt): Natasza Styczyńska

Writing – review & editing (Piśmiennictwo – sprawdzenie i edytowanie): Natasza Styczyńska

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Negocjacje Serbii z Unią Europejską: Dekada Wyzwań (2014–2024)

Streszczenie

Artykuł analizuje negocjacje akcesyjne Serbii z UE (2014–2024), koncentrując się na wzajemnym oddziaływaniu polityki wewnętrznej i celów polityki zagranicznej. Pragmatyczna polityka zagraniczna Serbii równoważy aspiracje UE ze strategicznymi partnerstwami (Rosja, Chiny, USA), odzwierciedlając jej kontekst historyczny (Ruch Państw Niezaangażowanych) i kwestię Kosowa. Wykorzystując metodologię jakościową, w tym przegląd literatury i wywiady z serbskimi aktorami politycznymi (politykami, ekspertami i urzędnikami państwowymi), niniejszy artykuł omawia wyzwania w negocjacjach z UE i nieznaczne postępy, wskazując na nierozwiązaną kwestię Kosowa jako jedną z głównych przeszkód politycznych. Pomimo deklarowanych przez serbski rząd priorytetów, analiza sugeruje rozdźwięk między retoryką a działaniami zarówno UE, jak i serbskich elit politycznych. Zaangażowanie UE w regionie jest oczywiste (np. Plan Wzrostu Bałkanów Zachodnich), ale wewnętrzna polityka Serbii i jej ambiwalentne stanowisko znacznie zmniejszają prawdopodobieństwo szybkiego przystąpienia do UE. Niniejszy artykuł oferuje wgląd w złożoność integracji Serbii z UE z perspektywy krajowych aktorów politycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: Serbia, Unia Europejska, rozszerzenie UE, Bałkany Zachodnie, polityka zagraniczna

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